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SUBJECT: DASD TOWNSEND'S SEPTEMBER 23-25 CONSULTATIONS WITH
GERMANY ON NATO AND EUROPEAN SECURITY ISSUES

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR GEORGE GLASS. REASONS: 1.4
(B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. DASD for European and NATO Policy Jim Townsend visited Berlin September 23-25 for the first annual bilateral defense consultations with the German MOD, and also had wide-ranging consultations with senior officials at the MFA and Chancellery. All were anxious about the current state of U.S. thinking on the way forward in Afghanistan and hoped the uncertainty surrounding the impact of the McChrystal Report would be resolved soon. While the Chancellery favors a complete re-write of the NATO Strategic Concept to make it short and more accessible to the public, the MFA and MOD were split, with the MOD open to new thinking and the MFA reluctant to start a new draft. All welcomed the new phased, adaptive approach on MD, noting that it would be easier "to sell" to the German public and would provide a better basis for cooperation with the Russians. MOD said that while it would not be "impossible" to station SM-3s in Germany in later phases, there would have to be a "convincing case" for doing so, based on a common threat assessment. The Chancellery suggested that a senior MDA official come to Germany to brief German officials on the technical aspects of the new system so that they are better prepared to explain and defend the proposal to the German public.

¶2. (C) SUMMARY CONTINUED: The MFA expressed enthusiasm for NATO Secretary General Rasmussen's speech proposing a new beginning for NATO-Russia relations and said the challenge now was to make the NRC "relevant." The Chancellery asked for early notification if the U.S. decides on the withdrawal of non-strategic nuclear weapons from Europe, noting that Merkel's CDU/CSU is the only German political party still supporting the current NATO nuclear share. MFA reported that "some interesting ideas" for breaking the deadlock on CFE include holding a "trial run" of the Adapted CFE Treaty and asking Russia to return to the CFE verification/notification regime on an informal basis. The Chancellery said Merkel would continue to support autonomous EU operations as a way to promote ESDP. MOD claimed that unquestioning U.S. support made Turkey less willing to compromise on NATO-EU cooperation. German officials also gave their initial assessment of new NATO Secretary General Rasmussen, voiced concern about the end to U.S. subsidization of Russian participants at the Marshall Center, and explained their views on NATO HQ reform and the proposed expansion of NATO common funding. END SUMMARY.

INTERLOCUTORS

¶3. (C) At MOD, Townsend's main interlocutor was Assistant

Chief of Staff for Politico-Military Affairs MG Karl Muellner; at the Chancellery, Security Affairs Director Geza von Geyr; at MFA, Deputy Political Director Eberhard Pohl and Special Envoy for Russia, Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia Hans-Dieter Lucas.

AFGHANISTAN

¶ 14. (C) All of our German interlocutors expressed uncertainty and concern about the current state of U.S. thinking on the way forward in Afghanistan in the wake of President Obama's initial reaction to the McChrystal report. Pohl from MFA noted that one-third of the parliamentarians elected in the September 27 Bundestag election (i.e., some 200) were new, so the government had the weighty task of shaping their views on Afghanistan before the parliamentary mandate came up for renewal in December. Pohl said the way things stand now, he would not be able to explain to the new parliamentarians "where we are going" in Afghanistan. He wondered if a military and civilian surge was a likely conclusion of the President's deliberations, noting that there was strong support in Germany for increasing support for police training and development assistance.

¶ 15. (C) MG Muellner at MOD stressed the importance of good strategic communications, especially in portraying President Obama's review of the McChrystal assessment. He warned against giving the impression that NATO was having doubts about its strategy and losing confidence in its ability to prevail. Similarly, he thought it was important to avoid the impression of "Americanization" of the operation. He regretted that NATO was not involved in Afghanistan from the

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start, because then the operations there would have been on the basis of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, making it easier to sustain the argument in Germany and elsewhere that the operation was essential to the security of the Alliance and not just a "mission of choice" to help facilitate reconstruction and development. He noted that most Germans believe the Bundeswehr deployment in Afghanistan makes Germany more vulnerable to terrorist attack, not less.

¶ 16. (C) Muellner agreed that ISAF only has a short time to show success before the window of opportunity closes, and that it was important to re-double efforts now. He confirmed that the next German government would probably be prepared to increase German military forces in the north when the parliamentary mandate for ISAF came up for renewal in December, but this had to be part of political and strategic framework that also included corresponding increases in the civilian engagement. He noted that the goal of the international conference on Afghanistan jointly proposed by Merkel, Sarkozy and Brown was to provide such a framework, along with clear expectations of the Afghan government.

¶ 17. (C) Von Geyr of the Chancellery thought renewal of the parliamentary mandate for ISAF this year would be "fine," but that if there was no progress in Afghanistan over the next year, further prolongation "will be a problem." He confirmed that with the Social Democrats now headed for opposition, the expected CDU/CSU-FDP government could find it more difficult to manage the Afghanistan issue. He expressed concern that a single successful large-scale attack against German forces could quickly activate and inflame the currently passive public opposition to the deployment.

STRATEGIC CONCEPT

¶ 18. (C) Muellner at MOD said differing views of Russia were the single most divisive issue in the Alliance and would complicate negotiation of the new Strategic Concept. Some Allies, like Germany, viewed Russia as a partner, but others, like Poland and Balts, still saw Russia as a threat. Muellner conceded that Russia posed a "risk" and noted that he alone had visited the Balts twice within the past six

weeks to demonstrate that Germany took their concerns seriously. (Comment: Along the same lines, Defense Minister Jung made a unprecedented week-long trip to all three Baltic states this past summer and Germany volunteered to do the current rotation of the Baltic air policing mission. End Comment.)

¶ 9. (C) Muellner thought it was important to stick to Article 5 as the core of the Strategic Concept, calling it the "glue" that binds the Alliance together. He noted that the countries of eastern Europe did not join NATO in order to do operations in Afghanistan, but saw that as the price for collective defense. Muellner agreed that these new Allies needed more than expressions of solidarity, but rather concrete expressions of political will, such as defense planning and a regular program of exercises. He noted that there was some debate about whether it was necessary to maintain all the detail about military capabilities in the new Strategic Concept. He said he had come to the conclusion that it would be better to update the current Strategic Concept rather than try to draft something brand new.

¶ 10. (C) Pohl from the MFA argued along the same lines, noting that starting from scratch on the new Strategic Concept would raise concerns among the new Allies that NATO was departing from its core task of collective defense. Pohl thought the main purpose of the Strategic Concept exercise should be to establish a "strategic consensus" within the Alliance, especially among all the Allies that have joined since the 1999 Concept was drafted. He claimed that even the three Allies that joined in 1999 "do not really understand" the current Strategic Concept since they were not fully involved in the negotiations.

¶ 11. (C) With regard to drafting the new Strategic Concept, Pohl thought it was important to have thorough consultations with all nations, so they would have ownership of the final product. He warned against starting consultations "at the top," which would leave no appeal except to heads of state and government if things got stuck. He also argued that a "revolutionary" approach to the Strategic Concept could raise

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constitutional problems in Germany if it appeared to modify the Washington Treaty. He noted that the German Constitutional Court had already warned the government in another case against trying to put a "treaty on wheels" by stretching its existing provisions.

¶ 12. (C) Pohl acknowledged that the Chancellery had a different view, believing the new Strategic Concept should be a complete re-write to make it more accessible to the public. Pohl argued that to meet that need, the Alliance could simply issue a separate short document (such as a Summit Declaration), as it did in 1999. Pohl urged not to follow the example of the European Security Strategy (ESS), which he criticized as being so vague and generic as to be almost useless. (Comment: That is an indirect and perhaps not completely unintended dig at Chancellery National Security Advisor Christoph Heusgen, who was responsible for the drafting the ESS when he worked for High Rep Solana in Brussels. End Comment.)

MISSILE DEFENSE

¶ 13. (C) Both Muellner at MOD and Pohl at MFA welcomed the new phased, adaptive approach (PAA), noting that it would be easier "to sell" to the German public and would provide a better basis for cooperation with the Russians. Pohl said that while the former proposal seemed to be "ideologically driven," the PAA made "much more sense" since it was geared against current threats. Pohl said it was logical to build up the MD system as the threat evolved. Muellner saw "no problem" with sea-based SM-3s "as long they were not in the Baltic Sea." He said that land-based interceptors would be "more problematic," especially if Germany itself were

considered as a host. While it was "not impossible" to station SM-3s in Germany, there would have to be a "convincing case" for doing so, based on a common threat assessment. Muellner also put down a marker that Germany had strong reservations about common funding for the Active Layered Theater Ballistic Missile Defense (ALTBMD) control system because of the high cost.

¶14. (C) Von Geyr from the Chancellery expressed surprise at the timing of the announcement and wondered how much of it was previewed with Moscow. He strongly encouraged the U.S. to send a senior official from the Missile Defense Agency (MDA) to Germany to give a detailed explanation of the technical aspects of the new system, like former MDA Director LTG Obering did when the previous MD plan was unveiled. Von Geyr emphasized that Chancellor Merkel had played a key role in getting the MD language in both the Bucharest and Strasbourg/Kehl NATO summit communiques.

RUSSIA

¶15. (C) Lucas at the MFA was very complimentary of Rasmussen's September 18 speech proposing a new beginning in NATO-Russia relations, calling it "extraordinary" and praising it for sending "exactly the right signal." He acknowledged that Russia was a difficult partner, but argued that it was in our own interest to develop a relationship with Moscow to deal with issues of common concern. He said the challenge now was "how to make the NATO-Russia Council relevant." MFA Russia Office Director Ernst Reichel argued that a strict ban on contact between NATO and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) did not seem to fit within the confines of the Secretary General's call for a broad engagement with Russia. He said that the NATO contact embassy in Moscow, for example, should be open to contacts with the CSTO.

¶16. (C) Muellner at MOD said that Germany's strategy in taming Russia was to increase interdependence through trade and investment, including gas deals. On gas, he argued that while this made Germany dependent as a consumer, Russia was equally dependent as a provider. He knew this contributed to Germany's reputation as a being too ready to appease the Russians, but noted that the Russians still do not recognize Germany as an equal partner.

NUCLEAR POLICY

¶17. (C) Muellner confirmed that Germany strongly supported President Obama's goal of Global Zero and, referring to the

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last meeting of the NATO High Level Group, thought nuclear issues were moving in a "good direction" and that the views of all Allies were being taken into consideration. Von Geyr claimed that the language in the Declaration on Alliance Security issued at the Strasbourg/Kehl NATO Summit regarding the continuing importance of "deterrence based on an appropriate mix of nuclear and conventional capabilities" had been Merkel's. Noting that the CDU/CSU is the only German political party still supporting the NATO nuclear share, von Geyr emphasized the importance of getting early notification if the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review recommends the withdrawal of non-strategic nuclear weapons from Europe.

CFE

¶18. (C) Muellner argued that the CFE Treaty was still valuable, less because it imposes a ceiling on weapon systems and more because it has a robust verification and inspection system that creates transparency and builds confidence. He agreed, however, that with the two-year anniversary of the Russian suspension rapidly approaching, it was not clear how much longer the status quo was sustainable. He said Germany was waiting for the U.S. to propose a way forward in the context of its arms control agenda with Russia. Pohl from

MFA said that "some interesting ideas" for breaking the deadlock included holding a "trial run" of the Adapted CFE (as opposed to provisional application) and asking Russia to get back into the CFE verification/notification regime on an informal basis.

TURKEY

¶19. (C) Muellner said that the Turks feel "very confident" of U.S. support on the NATO-EU deadlock, which he claimed makes Ankara less willing to compromise. He added flatly that "the solution is not to let the Turks join the EU." He revealed that the Turkish Chief of the General Staff had recently asked about establishing a strategic partnership with Germany and that MOD planned to respond positively. He also said that Germany would have "no problem" with Turkey joining the European Defense Agency, but that Cyprus was blocking.

ESDP

¶20. (C) Von Geyr reported that the Chancellor strongly supported development of the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) and in that regard, thought it was important that the EU look for opportunities to do "some things on our own," like the EULEX rule-of-law mission in Kosovo and the EU Atalanta counterpiracy operation. Von Geyr emphasized that Merkel was not trying to develop the EU as a counterweight to NATO, but simply thought that European integration and transatlanticism went "hand in hand."

NATO SYG RASMUSSEN

¶21. (C) Muellner praised Rasmussen for his leadership and vision, a clear improvement over de Hoop Scheffer, but said Rasmussen still needs to adjust to the fact that he is now the secretary general of an alliance of sovereign nations and not a head of state. Muellner also emphasized that it was important that Rasmussen be "inclusive" and build consensus at 28, and not cut deals ahead of time with big countries and then expect the rest of the alliance to follow along.

NATO HQ REFORM

¶22. (C) Muellner said Germany was a strong supporter of NATO HQ reform, but emphasized that this had to be done "at 28" and could not be negotiated by a small subgroup and then imposed on the rest, as had been done with the new command structure. He also stressed that Germany was "not convinced" about the benefits of expanding the scope of common funding to new areas like capabilities development. Pohl at MFA agreed that the notion that common funding increases the willingness of nations to deploy forces had not proven true.

MARSHALL CENTER

¶23. (C) Muellner noted that Germany was looking forward to U.S. feedback on its draft update of the 2004 bilateral guidance for the Marshall Center in Garmisch. He also

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expressed concern that the new U.S. policy requiring Russia to pay tuition like any other partner country would effectively cut off its participation and "end the dialogue."

Townsend noted that U.S. subsidization of Russian participants no longer seemed to make sense since Moscow tended to send intelligence agents and others who did not fit the established criteria.

Murphy